



THE NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

Reviewing Stand

EVANSTON, ILLINOIS

Are We Neglecting the Exceptional Child?

A radio discussion over WGN and the Mutual Broadcasting System
in cooperation with the International Council for Exceptional Children

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Broadcast continuously since 1934 by Northwestern University



THE REVIEWING STAND is a weekly radio forum presented by Northwestern University. The program was first broadcast by Station WGN, Chicago, October 14, 1934. It has been on the air continuously since that time, originating in the WGN studios, and, since 1935, carried by the stations of the Mutual Broadcasting System. THE REVIEWING STAND presents members of the Northwestern University faculty and distinguished guests from business, government, education, and the press in round table discussions of contemporary problems—the questions that are in the news. The program is under the direction of James H. McBurney, Dean of the School of Speech, Northwestern University and Miss Myrtle Stahl, Director of Educational Programs, WGN, Chicago.

The Northwestern University Reviewing Stand, published weekly beginning May 2, 1943, by the Offices of the Director of Radio (Public Relations), Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois. Entered as second class matter at the Post Office, Evanston, Illinois, under the Act of March 3, 1875. Subscription price, \$1.00 for 16 weeks, \$2.00 for 32 weeks, \$2.50 for one year. Single copies, ten cents.

Are We Neglecting the Exceptional Child?

MR. BORIN: The Reviewing Stand is happy to cooperate with the International Council for Exceptional Children in presenting today's broadcast.

As you know, last Sunday the Reviewing Stand discussed the normal child. This week, in the second in a series of programs devoted to child problems, we turn our attention to the exceptional child.

Hill, as President of the International Council for Exceptional Children, you should be able to speak for that group. Specifically, what children would your organization classify as exceptional? Or, to rephrase the question, just who is the exceptional child?

Need Special Services

MR. HILL: Inasmuch as our organization is composed of professional educators, we think of the exceptional child in terms of school adjustment. The exceptional child is the child who needs special services to make an adequate school adjustment. For instance, some of them are physically handicapped.

MR. BORIN: What do you mean, "physically handicapped?"

MR. HILL: The physically handicapped children include the blind, the deaf, the epileptics and orthopedics.

MR. BORIN: I'm lost again. What do you mean by "orthopedic?"

MR. HILL: Orthopedics are the crippled. They include the cerebral palsy children. Then too, some children are exceptional because they have serious speech disorders; others are intellectually exceptional.

MISS COURTENAY: In that group you

are including both the mentally retarded and gifted children.

MR. HILL: That would be right. And also we mustn't forget that a large number of children are emotionally and socially maladjusted.

MISS COURTENAY: It is encouraging to notice that these children are coming more and more into the foreground of our attention and that our whole philosophy is changing with regard to their treatment. We no longer look upon them as those to be punished but rather to be studied, to be cared for, and hopefully, to be returned to useful citizenship.

Number Requiring Aid

MR. BORIN: You have talked about various classes of exceptional children. How many exceptional children do we have in the United States?

MISS SHOVER: Well, as to the number needing special provisions for education, I think we might accept the number as more than four million children. I think it is rather interesting to note that out of the four million children who need special education only 450,000 children are receiving it. That means that out of the 11 per cent who need special education we have only one per cent who are receiving it. So I point out this fact: there is a great need for special education for children who aren't receiving it.

MR. BORIN: You have told us who the exceptional child is. It seems to me that in many cases it is clear that a child is exceptional. However, there are other cases where the distinction you make between the so-called "nor-

mal" and the "exceptional" is rather an arbitrary one.

MR. WESTLAKE: That is a very important point, because one can raise the question, "Who is exceptional?" Now, there is a group of individuals who can be differentiated and we are apt to think of them when we think of exceptional individuals or individuals with problems. We ought not to think of small groups, including the lame, halt and blind. There might be some youngsters who have difficulty reading at all, or doing arithmetic at all, but you have another large number of individuals who are doing "B" work, or who are reading and doing quite well, but if their problems are sorted out and are given special help their efficiency might be improved so they would be exceptional students or "A" students.

MR. BORIN: You are concerned about both the normal and the exceptional child?

'Human Engineering'

MR. WESTLAKE: Well, the philosophy and techniques that apply to exceptional children apply to all children, and it is a problem of human engineering, or bringing up the performance of all people. We are talking about the children of all parents who are listening, rather than the lame, halt and blind alone.

MISS COURTENAY: Do you agree that every one of us is exceptional in some respect and should make the most of our gifts and help to make up for deficiencies in our philosophy?

MR. BORIN: It is true, however, that you have to make the distinction for very practical purposes; you have to make the distinction so that you can group students in order to do a better job of educating them.

MISS COURTENAY: Quite true, because many cannot fit into the regular school pattern.

MR. BORIN: I am going to be rather cruel and practical at this point in the discussion. We all know that it takes a lot of money to educate the

exceptional child. Can you show me any results of training by any of these groups of special educators that would make me say, "Fine. The money I spent in taxes and voluntarily for special education has been well spent?"

Cost of Training

MISS SHOVER: I would like to speak to that point. The Office of Education and Rehabilitation has given us a figure that we can depend on. For every dollar the federal government spends on rehabilitation \$10 comes back in the form of federal income taxes paid by the handicapped. I think that is a figure every citizen in the country should know about.

MR. BORIN: Especially when it is very near March 15, wouldn't you say?

MISS SHOVER: I would say very definitely so, when people are apt to consider the cost of education. Remember, when we think of the cost of educating a child who has a visual problem or a severe crippling condition we must remember this figure. It pays ten to one.

MR. HILL: I would like to get this discussion away from some of these statistical considerations and get it on a personal plane. I don't suppose that we often think of the contributions that handicapped and exceptional children make to society. I am thinking now of a series of vocational aptitude tests that we have been giving to severely mentally retarded children in our high school group in Des Moines. We find that there are practically none of these severely retarded children who in some respect do not match or surpass the average high school pupil. Now, it may be in music; it may be in art; or in some other characteristic. I can think of one boy, for instance, who will exceed at least 19 out of 20 high school pupils in his musical ability.

MR. BORIN: But he is handicapped in some other area?

MR. HILL: Yes, he probably reads at third or fourth grade level.

MISS COURTEMAY: You recall one of the problems at our recent convention, Mr. Hill. The story of the severely handicapped young woman, a graduate of the Spaulding High School, who spoke out of the depths of her wheel chair and offered eloquent evidence on this same fact. She told how a private property which had been used as a cherished camp site for these crippled youngsters was offered for sale. Through their own initiative and their own efforts the youngsters managed to raise the funds to purchase the piece of property; then mortgaged it in order to finance a costly rehabilitation program. They have now cleared the mortgage and have made that splendid property available to their group.

Contribution

MISS SHOVER: I would like to bring out this to our listening audience: We have made many illustrious contributions in the past to the fields of art, music and science. We must not forget Beethoven, Thomas Edison, our late President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, Pasteur, Steinmetz, and many other people who have brought rich things to our culture so that we might have a better life. They were handicapped.

MR. WESTLAKE: But, Miss Shover, I think you will agree that these are outstanding examples to prove a point. But the most encouraging thing for us in this work is the large number of people who are brought into social and constructive living. Now, we are accustomed in a speech clinic, for instance, to know individuals who were going to quit school because they had a cleft palate problem. But with the cosmetic rehabilitation that came through, with surgery, dentistry, psychological treatment and speech training, those individuals were able to continue in school and to be highly successful. And likewise it is true with those persons who are handicapped with hearing problems. They can be taught to read lips. They can be taught to speak. Very often they can be fitted with hearing aids, and those

individuals take their part in society, and they do contribute to the total living.

MISS SHOVER: You would feel then that we might remind our audience again that for every dollar we expended \$10 was returned in income taxes.

MISS COURTEMAY: Certainly you would both agree that every potential delinquent we conserve and return to society as a good, useful, productive citizen is certainly an asset and not a debit in our budget.

MR. BORIN: These are very encouraging examples you present here. I assume there are many groups responsible for these remarkable achievements.

MR. WESTLAKE: There are many groups, but I think we might point out the particular groups that have been outstanding. One which has certainly distinguished itself is the National Society for Crippled Children and Adults, the group that Miss Shover works with so effectively. That group is an amazing one. Through its state organization it has spread throughout the country, and is doing a tremendous job in helping exceptional children and in helping exceptional adults. Their cerebral palsy program has been especially good and we ought to remember that at this point because they are now engaged in their Easter seal drive, an organization worth backing and we should support that drive.

Community Contributions

MISS SHOVER: I would like to add that colleges and universities have been taking a real part in bringing about achievements and accomplishments for our children, with handicaps, who are in need of special education programs. These administrators and faculty members have been very receptive to all of us. We have approached them about the development of training and special courses, special summer workshops, so we can do something about bringing more

people into the field of special education. We all realize that this shortage of personnel is one of the greatest obstacles.

MISS COURTENAY: There are many civic groups who have given fine support to our program. They are deeply interested in exceptional children. The Kiwanis, Rotarians, Lions men's groups, and especially the P.T.A. have been extremely important in quickening the public consciousness in an earnest effort to solve that problem.

MR. HILL: While you people are passing out the bouquets, I would like to put in a plug for the public schools. For a good many years the public schools have been developing programs of special education. In many cities these have been developed and maintained at a rather tremendous local expense. At the present time, as I remember it, there are 41 states that have laws that require or permit special education facilities at the local school level and most of these states provide for state subsidy for special education.

MR. WESTLAKE: As long as we are talking about the constituents at home, I would like to put in a plug for my local group, Alpha Chi Omega, who is working with cerebral palsy and cooperates with the National Society.

MR. BORIN: Before we pass out too many bouquets, I would like to get back to this item of expense. What does it cost to educate the exceptional child, Miss Shover?

Cost Versus Gain

MISS SHOVER: The figures that we have on education of the exceptional children as to cost are a little over two times as much as a normal child; if a child has a visual or a hearing loss it might go to almost three times. If you have a crippled child who needs a great many services and has a crippling condition that is quite serious, it might be a little more than three times as much. I think we need to realize that it depends a great deal on what they need and the type of

handicap that they have, because there is a great deal of variation.

MR. WESTLAKE: One thing we ought to keep in mind is that, although a certain rather small minority of these exceptional children require very expensive training and education, a large bulk of them require special training only for a time.

We are accustomed, as you know, to taking certain groups of these children, rehabilitating them and putting them back in with the normal children. Some carry no handicap with them. Some carry handicaps but have learned how to manage them. This is not always a large term investment in special education. And then there are many areas of special education where the investment is really very small in comparison with other costs of education.

MR. HILL: I would like to bring a new idea in here. I am wondering if we should think in terms of cost of special education as those costs can be separated and pointed out from the regular school expenditures. After all, special education is only a part of the total school program. It costs more to maintain a class in physics and chemistry than it does in English or social studies. Yet we wouldn't segregate the cost of maintaining a physics class.

MR. BORIN: You agree that there is some danger of neglecting the normal child in order to do an excellent job of educating the exceptional child?

'Benefit to All Children'

MR. WESTLAKE: I don't think there is a danger of that. Getting back to the point again of who is exceptional, you take a child with a speech problem, for instance. That child is essentially a normal child who has a handicap that is probably only temporary. And if we help that child and return him to society we are not neglecting the normal children. We are making a normal child, or training a normal child. We are—again I would like to repeat—in human engineering, and the children who are

so-called normal are profiting just as much.

Now, in special education we are interested in prevention. For instance, when you try to prevent hearing problems, you try to prevent visual problems, you try to prevent emotional disturbances and social maladjustment, you try to prevent speech problems, and so you are getting in and doing something that is improving the instructional program for all children. We are not thinking of the minority group of the lame, halt and blind. We are thinking of all children.

MISS SHOVER: We have agreed that what we do for all children also helps children who have handicaps and are in need of special education; that it is important that we have good educational programs for our normal children; that we should have improved building facilities, better lighting conditions, and improved standards for faculty and teachers, and in that way we also benefit our children with handicaps.

MISS COURtenay: I agree with you. Inasmuch as the school system maintains and promotes a sound health program we are really only a part of that health program. We simply make special provisions when they are needed.

'Educate Public'

MR. HILL: I would like to turn this question around a little. I am much more concerned that in developing facilities for the normal child we may crowd out these special services for the handicapped and exceptional children. As you know, at the present time the schools are facing a tremendous crisis. We have overcrowded classes; we have need for school buildings. In many cities the special education program may be literally crowded out because of lack of facilities.

MISS SHOVER: You think, Mr. Hill, we might be able to do something effectively about that if we do a better job in our public educational program

as to the need of education for all children, including our handicapped?

MISS COURtenay: May I add quickly, educating them to the achievements which are possible, the achievements which pay rich dividends in useful and happy living.

MR. HILL: I'm sure that we have to educate our public, and we've got to show that this program pays, or else we are going to go down in this crisis.

MR. BORIN: You have been talking about poor conditions and overcrowding. Are those two of the obstacles you face in achieving the most efficient special education for the exceptional child?

MISS COURtenay: No, by no means. There are many others. Of course, the budget always presents a hurdle. Aside from that, I think we definitely need a wide program in recruiting trained and personable personnel, people who will accept with enthusiasm the challenge that special education offers.

Teacher Shortage

MISS SHOVER: I would like to put more emphasis on that point. According to the Office of Education we are short 80,000 teachers. We have need for 100,000 teachers and only 20,000 available. How do we expect to educate anywhere near all of our handicapped children if we only have 20 per cent of the personnel needed to man these programs? So I would like to say that we should have a very effective and aggressive campaign on recruitment, so that every person in the community will say, "Here is an opportunity, a challenge, a career to serve the handicapped."

MR. BORIN: Why is it that you don't have more persons making the education of the handicapped a career?

MISS COURtenay: I think we have real need of more training, more centers of training in these many highly special fields.

MR. BORIN: You mean there is a lack of training facilities?

MISS COURTENAY: Yes, there aren't enough training programs available.

In the second place, we need to remember that many of these special fields are not glamorous to the prospective teacher. He or she looks upon them as a rather dead end street. When the superintendent is thinking of promotion he is likely to overlook those in special education.

MR. WESTLAKE: I think we have another thing to think of also. We are recruiting practically all of our special teachers and our personnel from normal groups and many normal children, so-called normal, go through public schools and don't realize that there is such a field as this. They are hardly aware of the presence of handicapped people. They all hear of doctors, lawyers, music teachers, and other kinds of teachers, but they have no contact and they have no way of becoming interested in this field.

'Encourage Applicants'

MISS SHOVER: I believe we could do more on career days in colleges and high schools to present a picture of the opportunity of working with handicapped children in the educational field. And I think we need to be a little more selective in choosing the kind of person that enters this field. We need someone who has the optimum in physical and mental health.

MR. BORIN: Maybe that is the reason there aren't more people entering the field. Maybe you require too much emotional and physical stability. Are your requirements too rigid?

MR. HILL: I don't believe so. I am very much convinced that the good teacher who loves children, and who has a missionary zeal can become a good teacher in special education.

MR. BORIN: What happens to the girls who go into this kind of work and find that they do not want to follow it, at least as a career?

MISS SHOVER: The worst enemy we have in retaining personnel is one that I don't know how to combat—maybe you, sir, can tell us—that is Cupid. We

lose each year to him a number of young women who are very much interested in continuing their work. We have, however, made an effort in many cities and states to maintain their interest and to keep them on after marriage at least on a part time basis.

MR. WESTLAKE: We might be giving the wrong idea here in some ways. We are finding a tremendous upsurge in our enrollment in the areas of speech and hearing problems, but even with our greatly increased enrollment we find ten jobs for every graduate. We are getting more people but we aren't keeping up with the demand.

'Need Increasing'

MISS COURTENAY: Doesn't that bear evidence to the fact that as the general enrollment in public schools is increasing there is an increase in the field of special education?

MR. HILL: I would like to add in relation to Miss Shover's statement, and in the hopes that some of the listening audience may be interested in special education, that as a school administrator I have found that Cupid visits much more frequently among special education teachers. [Laughter]

MR. BORIN: Throughout this discussion several questions have come to my mind. I would like to pose the first for this group. You seem to be emphasizing the need for making everyone normal. I wonder if that is a legitimate objective? Do you really want to make everyone normal?

MR. HILL: I think we would be very silly if we try to make everybody normal. I heard that discussed last night and the point was brought out that we can't make everyone normal and it would be just too normal if everybody were a normal person. There are some handicaps which one can do very little about. You can enable the person to live with his handicap and build upon his strength and that is, I think, usually the objective in special education.

MISS SHOVER: Would you say that one of our objectives is to make the handicapped person a part of society rather

than apart from it so he can make whatever contributions he is capable of making?

'No Normal Person'

MR. WESTLAKE: I disagree a little, just from an academic level. I would like to see a person made into a normal individual to see what he would look like. What is a normal individual? Is there a person alive who is not an exception in some way? What we are doing by the rehabilitation and special education effort is just minimizing the handicap that the person has, teaching him to live with it, improving his assets so he fits into society and gets along well. I would like to see created this normal person and then we ought to take a look at him.

MR. BORIN: I think the radio stations and newspapers in this country would have a good time with this "normal" person, wouldn't you agree, Westlake?

MR. WESTLAKE: Yes.

MR. HILL: I think he would be a dull person.

MR. BORIN: Do you, as persons involved daily with the exceptional child, have any final important recommendations to make in respect to this problem?

MISS COURtenay: I plead, above all else, for a recruitment of qualified, trained teachers.

MISS SHOVER: I would like to ask that we have a more effective public educa-

tion program so that those people who live in rural areas, as well as metropolitan units, will know how important it is, how essential it is, to have provisions for special education.

MR. WESTLAKE: I would like to make a plea for research. If we want to find out what makes people tick, we can get our biggest dividends by exploring exceptional groups and the results of research in this area are going to recruit people.

MR. HILL: I would like to emphasize the need for setting up possibilities for research. One way that can be done is by strengthening that particular division in the Office of Education that has to do with the education of the exceptional child.

MR. BORIN: It seems to me that the members of this panel as experienced authorities in special education have told us a good deal about the exceptional child. You have told us that he is either gifted or handicapped. You have described his problems of adjusting to our society. You have indicated that the task of training him is an expensive but important job. You have revealed to us that the progress you have made in developing teaching methods in this area has been rapid. You have grappled with some of the ethical problems you find in pursuing your work from day to day. And, most important, I think, you have suggested that we as laymen can do a great deal to help the exceptional child develop as a useful citizen in our society.

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Suggested Readings



Compiled by Barbara Wynn, Assistant,
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Library, Northwestern University



BURTON, MARY LOUISE HART, and JENNINGS, SAGE HOLTER. *Your Child Or Mine; the Story of the Cerebral-palsied Child*. New York, Coward-McCann, 1949.

Describing a number of spastic children, tells the conditions from which they were brought for treatment, and what was done for each.

CARROLL, HERBERT A. *Genius in the Making*. New York, McGraw-Hill, 1940.

Discusses the mental, social and physical characteristics of the gifted child, and the educational adjustments necessary for his progress.

DOLCH, EDWARD WILLIAM. *Helping Handicapped Children in School*. Champaign, Ill., Garrard Press, 1948.

Includes chapters on the slow learner, the mentally handicapped, the emotionally handicapped, and the gifted.

GOSSARD, A. P. *Superior and Backward Children in Public Schools*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1941.

A description of the attempts which have been made to meet the problem, based on annual school reports of ten representative cities over a period of seventy years.

HATHAWAY, MRS. WINNIFRED (PHILLIPS). *Education and Health of the Partially Seeing Child; Published for the National Society for the Prevention of Blindness, Inc.* New York, Columbia University Press, 1943.

Describes the principles, methods, and equipment used in teaching the partially seeing child.

United States. Office of Education. Bulletin 1948, no. 5. "Crippled Children in School." R. P. Mackie. Washington, D. C., Government Printing Office, 1948.

Gives the essentials of a school program for the crippled child, and emphasizes the values of teacher-parent cooperation.

United States. Office of Education. Bulletin 1949, no. 2. "State Legislation for the Education of Exceptional Children. E. H. Martens. Washington, D. C., Government Printing Office, 1949.

An account of what the states have done through legalization to give the exceptional child adequate educational opportunities.

American Magazine 140:46-7+, D., '45. "Are You Throttling a Future President?" H. ZORBAUGH.

A discussion of America's "super-kids." Maintains that the potential leaders of tomorrow are being neglected and misunderstood, and tells what can be done about it.

Crippled Child 26:9-11, O., '48. "Needed: a Hearing Program." GORDON D. HOOPLE.

States the need for a national hearing program which would discover the child's hearing needs at an early age, and would insure the cooperation of parent, doctor, and teacher.

Education 69:275-9, Ja., '49. "Teacher and the Handicapped Child." L. F. CAIN.

Pointing out where teachers fail in understanding normal children, describes the special problems they encounter with the handicapped.

Elementary School Journal 49:160-67, N., '48. "An Educational Program for Children with Impaired Hearing." LOUIS M. DI CARLO.

Outlines a comprehensive school program for deaf or hard-of-hearing children.

Elementary School Journal 49:511-15, My., '49. "Teaching Bright Children." J. C. SEEVERS.

Emphasizes the necessity for challenging the gifted child.

Hygeia 26:120-1+, F., '48. "America's Long Forgotten Children." S. H. CARLETON.

Tells how the public schools are awakening to the needs of children with heart disease.

Hygeia 26:272-3+, 352+, Ap.-My., '48. "The Cerebral Palsied Child Goes to School." W. M. PHELPS and T. A. TURNER.

Describing cerebral palsied children, discusses their ability to learn, what has already been done to educate them, and what more should be done.

Journal of Exceptional Children 13:201-4+, Ap., '47. "Problems in Educating the Highly Endowed." EDITH FOX CARLSON.

Comments on the values and limitations of special classes for gifted children.

Journal of Exceptional Children 16:161-164+, Mr., '50. "State Legislatures and Exceptional Children in 1949." ELISE H. MARTENS.

Points out that there has been an increase in the number of states heeding the need for special education and willing to assume the financial responsibility for providing it.

Journal of Exceptional Children 15:66-70, Ja., '49. "Special School Services for Epileptic Children." GEORGE E. LEVINREW.

Maintains that children with epilepsy are not exceptional, but are unnecessarily handicapped by the needless anxiety with which they are regarded.

Journal of Exceptional Children 16:136-138+, F., '50. "Towards Mental Health for Exceptional Children." S. R. LAYCOCK.

Tells how the teacher can help exceptional children meet their emotional needs through relationships, work, recreation and community service.

National Education Association Journal 39:136-7, F., '50. "Hard-of-Hearing Child." S. R. SILVERMAN.

Discusses special school arrangements for the hard-of-hearing child and the need for guidance and for carrying out remedial measures within the framework of the regular school.

National Education Association Journal 37:358-9, S., '48. "Needs of Bright and Gifted Children." PAUL WITTY.

Explains why gifted children have been neglected and what can be done to make school more significant to them.

New Yorker 25:58-69, Je. 4, '49. "Reporter at Large; Hunter College Elementary School." D. LANG.

A discussion of the only public school in the United States devoted solely to the education of exceptionally intelligent children.

Outlook for the Blind 42:207-12, S., '48. "The Coordination of the Work of the Residential School for the Blind with that of the Public School." WALTER R. DRY.

Describes the state wide program for the visually handicapped which Oregon inaugurated in 1943.



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